

A method and device for detecting and inoculating emails infected with viruses is described. The method involves identifying a particular traffic and its associated data packets as an email session and scanning the associated data packets in order to compare their contents with a database of known signatures. If a match is found between the data packets and a signature of a known virus, it is determined if there is an attachment to the email. If an attachment is detected, some or all of the bits of the data packets associated with the attachment are altered, thereby rendering the infected attachment harmless. The network device includes memory for storing the database of known signatures and a content processor able to compare the contents of data packets with a database of known signatures. The content processor is also operable to alter some or all of the bits of the attachment to inoculate the email and attachment.

[illegible]